

MEETING MINUTES

Project	Mercer Int'l Middle School	Project No	2002
Subject	SDAT Meeting #5	Meeting Date	5/11/2021
From	Bassetti Architects	Date	5/20/2021

Attending

+ *Attended in person*

* *Attended by Phone*

x *Did not Attend*

* Brad Tong Managing Director	Shiels Oblatz Johnson	* Cheri Hendricks Design Manager	Broadview Associates
* Justine Kim Project Manager	Shiels Oblatz Johnson	* Lorne McConachie Educational Planner	Bassetti Architects
* Paige McGehee Program Coordinator	Shiels Oblatz Johnson	* Caroline Lemay Principal in Charge	Bassetti Architects
x Jerome Hunter Founder of Seattle School for Boys	Partnered with SOJ	* Michael Davis Design Principal	Bassetti Architects
* Vince Gonzales Senior Project Manager	Seattle Public School	* Amanda Hoehn Project Manager	Bassetti Architects
x Deborah Northern Equity and Engagement Manager	Seattle Public School	x Edward Arreola Project Designer	Bassetti Architects
x Sarah Pritchett Executive Director	Seattle Public School	* Cindy Watters Mercer Principal	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Sherrie Encarnacion Mercer Assist. Principal	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Katie Humphreys SpEd Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Aaron Hennings Music Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Sue Monroe Librarian	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Janet Bautista Science and STEM Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Emily Elasky Science and STEM Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Matt Kochevar Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	x Virginia Andrews School Counselor	Mercer Int'l Middle School
* Katie Badillo Wright Teacher	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Tracy Kolner Attendance Specialist	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Azi Brannock Student	Mercer Int'l Middle School	x Logan Neil Student	Mercer Int'l Middle School

* Rumi Takahashi Parent	Mercer Int'l Middle School	* Erin Okuno Parent	Mercer Int'l Middle School
x Grace Floyd Parent	Mercer Int'l Middle School		

Notes

This was the fifth SDAT (School Design Advisory Team) Meeting for the Mercer Int'l Middle School Project. Statewide restrictions to “stay home” in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 had us use videoconferencing to conduct this meeting. These notes do not substitute for the contents of the presentation; rather they supplement it by capturing context and comments made during the meeting, so please reference page numbers within the presentation.

1. WELCOME AND AGENDA

- + Amanda welcomed the group to SDAT #5. She gave an overview of today's agenda and reiterated that this meeting was a safe space for all. (page 1-4)

2. SDAT #4 RECAP OF SITE ORGANIZATION EXERCISE

- + Amanda reviewed the site organization diagrams from our breakout exercise in SDAT #4 where we had small groups place programmatic pieces on a site plan to help discuss adjacencies and program priorities as they related to the site (connection to outdoor learning, connection to playfield, etc).
 - o Group 1: (page 6)
 - Placed academic neighborhoods toward Jefferson park.
 - Commons at the heart, and the library nearby
 - Parking was grouped near Columbian Way
 - o Group 1, additional study done after the SDAT meeting: (page 7)
 - Placed academic neighborhoods towards Jefferson park with green space between each neighborhood.
 - Commons and Library at the heart of the school.
 - An easier turn around for the parking off of Columbian Way.
 - The front entry off 16th Ave S.
 - o Group 2: (page 8)
 - Academic neighborhoods stacked 3 stories on the Northeast side of the site.
 - Courtyards near the front of the school.
 - Parking split into long term and short term.
 - o Group 3: (page 9)
 - Academic neighborhoods near Jefferson Park with green space.
 - Commons at the heart and family and community engagement near the Commons.
 - Art towards the entrance and commons to showcase the student work.
 - CTE spaces integrated into the Academic Neighborhoods.
 - Parking split into long term and short term.
 - Library on the second level over the entry to capture views.
 - o Additional Study done after the SDAT: (page 10)
 - Academic Neighborhoods along the Northeast side of the site with good sun orientation and green space between each one.
 - Library and admin near the front entry.
 - Commons connecting the athletics to the Academic Neighborhoods.

- Commons and gym opening out onto the multi-purpose playfield. Basketball courts and playfield are adjacent to Jefferson Park.
- Green space buffer between the building and the parking.

3. DISTILLED SITE-SPECIFIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- + Amanda recapped the Site-Specific Design Principles. The presentation shows them with different colors to differentiate between District Design Principles (Black), SDAT added Design Principles (Red), and Student added Design Principles (Blue).
 - o Learner-Centered Environment (page 12)
 - The building is designed with **students' needs placed first**.
 - The campus provides opportunities for students to explore hypotheses and test ideas, **emphasizing principles to support math proficiency**.
 - As the information hub for all types of student-led learning, **the library** shall be designed as a visually **open and flexible academic heart**.
 - Provide acoustics that allow for quiet and focus within primary learning spaces**.
 - Provide places with good lighting and attractive backdrops for kids to sing, dance, play and perform**.
 - Provide meaningful connections to the natural environment through use of natural elements and strong indoor/outdoor connections**.
 - Provide bright and open, indoor and outdoor places for students to gather and socialize**.
 - Provide a variety of different-sized outdoor spaces, including covered ones, with seating to support teaching, learning, and socializing outdoors**.
 - o Personalizing Environment: (page 13)
 - Create **smaller groupings of classrooms** so that teams of teachers can work with a single cohort of students, and students and teachers can know each other well.
 - Provide **spaces for individualized support services** for students.
 - Locate grade-level **administrators & counselors near where students** spend most of their day.
 - Make the **student dining area comfortable & attractive** for all kids so there's no stigma in eating school lunch, **with comfortable small-group eating spaces that are visually connected to the larger group**.
 - Provide space where SpEd students can be a community**.
 - The environment should **represent the Mercer community**, using art, murals, places, faces, & music, to reinforce a sense of identity. Use imagery of leaders from our Mercer communities to celebrate our diverse heritage.
 - Provide spaces within common areas to prominently **display student work as well as art** that reflects their community and culture.
 - Provide small nooks** where students can create their own space or connect with friends.
 - Provide outdoor places students can use after hours** without adult supervision.
 - o Program Adaptability: (page 14)
 - Create non-traditional classroom spaces** that use flexible furniture to support a variety of teaching and learning activities.
 - Provide nimble spaces that **enhance opportunities for student leadership and voice**.
 - Provide amenities such as movable whiteboards or rotating walls to **support collaboration and invite innovation**.

- Minimize built-ins** that make changes difficult.
- Provide flexibility for future capacity; make it **future-proof**.
- Community Connections: (page 15)
 - Create a building with a **clear entry** and a **strong presence** that enhances the school's identity.
 - Use clear, effective, multi-lingual signage throughout.
 - Provide a **range of partner/mentor spaces** dispersed through the school, with varying degrees of privacy to suit different types of activities.
 - Create spaces that can be **shared by multiple community groups** via rotating schedules, drop-in services, and other methods.
 - Provide welcoming **space for family outreach** near the front of the school.
 - Zone the building** so that some spaces (gym, library) and some services (community partners, family support) can be utilized after hours without providing access to the entire school.
- Aesthetics: (page 16)
 - The school is **appealing, warm, and inspires** students to achieve.
 - The building provides **generous daylight**, and a **stimulating multi-sensory environment**.
 - Circles and curves are used to **emphasize a relaxed feel**.
 - Cheerful colors and **connections to nature brighten experiences** and soften spaces.
 - Consider using a **universal theme of "Journey"** to honor where we are from.
- Safety: (page 17)
 - The school should feel like a **safe haven**.
 - It should be **welcoming & supportive** for students who have experienced trauma.
 - Provide a **generous entryway** where adults can greet students.
 - The **main office should be next to the entry, and should be open & transparent** with comfortable seating & student art.
- Collaboration: (page 18)
 - Provide spaces:
 - that **promote group work** and communication.
 - that **invite collaboration and non-Western ways** of teaching & learning to support **educational justice**.
- Sustainability: (page 19)
 - Encourage a culture of conservation and environmentally responsible behaviors** by combining learning with sustainability. **Use displays that demonstrate the environmental impacts of activities & choices.**
 - Use solar or other renewable energy.**
 - Use durable materials and systems.**
 - Support environmental justice** by equitably providing what different groups need.
 - Provide a **sense of refuge** within an urban center, with strong indoor and outdoor connections to nature.
- + We had a request after the meeting to add an additional Design Principle:
 - **Design for accessibility and inclusiveness for all students.**

4. SITE ANALYSIS

- + Amanda reviewed a site plan showing significant features that are nearby including the VA hospital, Jefferson Park, bus stops, the 15th Ave intersection improvement, and various restaurants and civic/community facilities. (page 21)
- + Amanda also reviewed a site plan showing the Duwamish and Cedar-Sammamish drainage, prevailing winds, sun levels during summer and winter solstice, and orientation for views. (page 22)

5. DESIGN OPTIONS

- + Mike reviewed 4 design options. He acknowledged that we used input from a variety of stakeholders which includes the SDAT group, SPS Green Resolution, the Educational Specification and technical standards, codes, etc.
- + The Academic Crown Jewel (page 24)
 - o This scheme is very efficient and optimizes solar orientation with two bars oriented in the east/west direction.
 - o The entry highlights the southwest corner and creates a connection to the street level at 16th and Columbian.
 - o The resource spaces (Commons, choir, band, gym) are located in the southern bar. This makes this area of the building easier to zone for after-hours use.
 - o The classrooms are laid out in groups of 3 around a shared learning commons. This layout continues for 3 stories.
 - o The bar that connects to two bars houses special ed, health, art, and community partners on the main level and the library on the second level. The library is the crown jewel capturing views in multiple directions.
- + Community Connections (page 25)
 - o This scheme provides more of a street presence for the building.
 - o The entry is located off 16th Ave which has less traffic than Columbian Way.
 - o The sawtooth building allows small outdoor learning areas for each of the learning commons giving a good connection to the site.
 - o The classroom wings continue for three stories.
 - o The resource wing is located to the north giving a strong connection to Jefferson Park and a new multi-purpose play field.
 - o The parking and bus route stretches from Columbian Way to 16th Ave to help alleviate congestion.
- + String of Pearls (page 26)
 - o This scheme creates small groups of classrooms along a main spine. The classrooms within these groups have proper solar orientation.
 - o This is a two-story scheme with a similar classroom layout on both floors.
 - o The entry is located in the Southwest corner creating a connection to the street level.
 - o The bus loops around the back of the site while the parking and parent drop is along the south and west.
 - o The stage is centrally located and can be either a black box or open onto the commons.
 - o The library is located above the admin on the second level and can capture views to Mount Rainier and the Puget sound.
 - o The option has a small multi-purpose playfield.
- + Connection to Nature (page 27)
 - o This scheme is also a two-story scheme with the classroom wings stacked.

- The entry is located off 16th Ave and you arrive in between the classroom area and the resource area directly facing the commons.
- The resource area is located near parking for ease of after hour activities.
- The classroom wing is located along the north edge of the site and has larger groupings of classrooms around a shared learning commons.
- This scheme has the library on the main level with access to an outdoor courtyard.
- This scheme also looks at having the bus loop around the back of the site.

6. BREAK OUT GROUP EXERCISE

- + We broke into 3 small groups to evaluate each design option. Below is the feedback from those groups. (page 29)
 - Group 1:
 - Which scheme has meaningful connections to the outdoor environment:
 - Scheme 2 with direct outdoor learning areas.
 - Sue loves the multi-purpose field on site. The current Jefferson Park field is separated from everything and barriered by classrooms. She likes design of #1 better but feels the field in Jefferson Park is disconnected from the school.
 - She also feels that placing the pathway to the field near classrooms is a challenge for distraction as well as supervision.
 - Cindy: The use of the field at Jefferson Park is not a promised future. Having our own playfield allows us to have a fence around our school. She would lean toward the field size of Scheme #'s 2 and 3 rather than 1 and 4. She wants the playfield to be turf not grass so that it's weather resistant (Cheri advised that's at least a \$1 million cost premium for a full-size field.)
 - Scheme #3 - Sue feels the outdoor spaces tucked in between the wings would not be used because of the windows looking out onto the spaces.
 - Which one offers the best site supervision?
 - Cindy asked: During the day? And at lunchtime? Scheme #2.
 - Cheri asked about bus and vehicle drop off zones. Cindy explained the administrators supervise buses mostly, not much for drop off. Dropoff zones will be a negotiation with the city so she doesn't want to comment on that because it won't be a big influence on the configuration. So "figure it out with the City and we'll adapt."
 - For the schemes with bus drop off lane on the north and east, she noted that even with signage, cars will come into the site off of 16th and drive in on the bus drop off and we won't be able to stop it.
 - Which has the best classroom groupings:
 - Cindy noted that #2 is a long way to walk; particularly from admin to the last classroom.
 - Katie and Cindy think that Scheme 3 has the best classroom groupings (Cheri agrees)
 - SpEd person likes #3 for the community orientation but prefers 4 because she sees that visual connection.
 - Flexibility for future capacity: Mike noted that 1 & 2 are three-story schemes so there's more site room for an addition. 3 & 4 are two stories: and have more classrooms per floor.
 - Cindy doesn't want to add on. If we don't have enough classrooms, it's not big enough from the beginning. Cheri advised that the number of teaching stations to be provided is limited by the pre-determined budget,

and that the number will be determined in a discussion with Capital Projects and Planning.

- Which has a clear entry & a presence:
 - The “eroded” corner at the SW portion of the site was generally liked.
 - Entries for Schemes #2 and #4 not as clear because they’re on 16th.
 - Really like the idea of having the building entry on the corner.
 - Scheme #1: Entry plaza could be strong, so the school is not hidden. If we retain the parking out front, it’s more difficult to create a “beacon” or community icon at the entry.
 - Mike: What about parking on the north? The group expressed concerns about bringing strangers into the site, plus people who use Jefferson field will start using it, so parking won’t be available for school use.
 - Cindy: don’t think that 16th could sustain the amount of traffic that would be generated by placing parking in the northeast corner.
 - Which option is best for safety?
 - Katie Wright: In Scheme #3 wings, the staff can take care of a situation, or block it off if necessary. The classroom areas are small scale so staff can communicate with everyone in the area.
 - Others thought that in Scheme 3 the courtyards would be hiding places.
 - Katie Hughes: SpEd person: noted that Scheme #4 has a lot of entrances and exits; she’d prefer to see side entrances limited, as she worries about too much accessibility to the learning spaces.
 - Best for collaboration: hard to know if you don’t know what the learning commons look like; so next time we’ll bring images to show how they look and feel. Provide a “frame of reference” for the collaborative spaces.
 - Cindy asked: Whose collaboration? Both for students and for adults.
 - Katie W asked: If one section is Social Studies, one ELA, what does it look like; or if organized by grade level?
 - Library: The librarian “ hates” the library in #3 because on the lower floor of the east side, it’s wasting the beautiful view. Right now you have the music rooms with no windows facing the view. Cindy agrees! Cheri noted that if we put it upstairs for the view it’s important to make it feel connected to the rest of the school because the ed specs require that it function as the academic heart.
 - Daylighting: it was noted that the goal with ANY scheme is to get good daylighting.
 - Sustainability: best layout for that? No group comments, so Cheri noted that the Board’s oversight committee will be a strong influence on the layout and massing of the buildings and is likely to lean in the direction of Scheme #1 because of its solar orientation.
 - Other: Soccer field doesn’t need to be huge; they just need a place kids can run around in all weather and not come in a muddy mess.
 - Cindy wants a fence around the entire site.
- Group 2:
 - Learning neighborhoods: 3 story buildings are harder to connect with the outdoors, due to longer distance to get there. 2 story buildings are better, but we lose more real estate. It’s a conundrum. Perhaps roof outdoor space maybe an option?

- 3rd option has the best line of sight for the school community. Getting to know each other would be easier. 1st option has less outdoor learning spaces. 2nd option has nice access to outdoor spaces in a more equitable way from classrooms.
 - Mercer teachers are highly collaborative, so visibility to the rest of the school staff is very important.
 - Hamilton with flexible spaces had disruptive effect to the classrooms. Breakout spaces in the 2nd and 4th would be similar to that.
 - However, those flex spaces could be potential for added capacity – if classroom sizes could be smaller, like 10 students.
 - Can you do different sizes of flex spaces? With larger learning commons with outdoor access is nice.
 - Regarding safety – lunch time access to the park is too far, in reverse evacuation scenario, it is difficult to get to all the students.
 - Did you look at any schemes with classroom wings to the east and outdoor spaces to the west? Western classrooms will be a challenge due to the harsh western light.
 - 2nd scheme shows classrooms too close to the west and the street for safety.
 - Being hidden from the arterial streets are not necessarily a bad thing.
 - Like the multiple outdoor spaces in 2nd option.
 - 4th option has more access to outdoor spaces, especially if you could introduce some outdoor spaces on the 2nd floor.
 - 1st option with smaller learning spaces, and straight line of sight for staff are nice. 3rd option for the admin and south half of the floor plan is nice.
 - Adaptability is better on 2nd and 4th schemes.
 - School identity with clear main entry – corner entry is nice.
 - Daylighting –_all seem pretty good; at some point we should do shadow study for winter sun, don't want to shadow itself.
 - How are larger spaces daylit? Typical commons would open to outdoor areas with generous light, gym – clerestory or skylight, library expansive daylight.
 - #2 with SW exposure – not good.
 - There is not really one favorite scheme, as each one has pluses and minuses.
- Group 3:
- Which scheme has meaningful connections to the outdoor environment:
 - Concepts #3 &4, maybe 2
 - Re #1, if selected suggest creating a rooftop outdoor space so 3rd floor classrooms have better proximity
 - Which option has the best small groupings of classrooms so students and teachers can get to know each other well:
 - #1 best for sightlines
 - #2 provides good balance of both objectives (sightlines + group collaboration)
 - Which option provides flexibility for future capacity:
 - #1 & 2 because SDAT can envision building upwards without compromising site open area
 - Which option creates a building with a clear entry and presence that enhances the school's identity:

- All are good because it vastly improves over today
- #1 seems best for accessibility (shortest distance from nearest parking)
- #3 & 4 back loop bus drop off is good idea but NOTE that many kids arrive from Jefferson Park and would then need to traverse its pathway (as shown if coming from 16thAve) thus = safety concern
- Which option provides generous daylight (+Views added as a related priority lens):
 - #1 and 4 = strongest candidates for light
 - #4 views to Jefferson Field & Inner City
 - #2 not much views
 - #1 views to downtown from 3rd Flr
 - #2 views onto campus playgrounds / playfields could be distraction from classrooms 's = not ideal
- Which option makes the school feel like a safe haven:
 - #1 and 4 = decent sightlines, less eddies in the stream of students passing in the hallways for bullying
- Which option promotes group work:
 - #1, 2, 3 preferred over #4
 - #3 is what more of the incoming kids from feeder elementary schools are familiar with (more open than closed classroom environments). This was not necessarily good or bad but an observation.
- Which option provides the best environmentally responsible site layout:
 - #1 & 2 preferred to conserve the open land on the site
 - #1 & 2 offer clarity in organization separation by floor (1 grade per floor)
- OVERALL:
 - Only 1 SDAT member had time to voice his/her overall preference which was #2.

7. ALL GROUP REPORT BACK

- + Group 1:
 - Conversations gravitated toward 3 & 4, though there is concern about blocking the connection to the field in Jefferson Park.
- + Group 2:
 - Liked components of each of the schemes.
 - The ones with the common spaces toward the south end are better in general.
 - Lots of discussion about bus access but no real resolution.
 - None of us liked the classrooms on the south end, next to the traffic.
 - SW entry sequence is a good idea but don't have cars interfere with it.
 - The size of the learning commons in Option 1 is more manageable but doesn't have as much flexibility.
- + Group 3: Noted the ease of programming with the 3 level schemes as there can readily be one floor for each grade level.
 - Option 3 sightlines on site a concern, as it creates a lot of nooks.
 - There is a lot of clarity of sightlines along corridors in Options 1 and 4.
 - The VA complex next door is a loud eyesore, creating a huge shadow on the site; which option keeps attention away from that?
 - Option 2 Learning Commons breakout areas were liked.
 - The views from the site are a big deal, and the Library on 2nd floor is appealing.

- With playfield and tight site, student activity can be distracting. Focus on providing views of nature rather than the playfield.
 - This group didn't think that one option stood out, but option 3 was the least desirable.
- + General comment about buses> a lot of students are walking to schools from Jefferson Park so it's a safety concern to have them cross the bus lane.

8. NEXT STEPS

- + Next SDAT #6 will be June 8th. (page 30)
- + Bassetti will provide meeting minutes to the group.
- + See attached documents from meeting: (Presentation slide show)

END OF MEETING MINUTES